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Q & A's

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This is not an easy transition. We are not there yet. But we are moving rapidly and surely in the right direction. And when we reach our goal, we will have constructed a new model of intelligence, a uniquely American model of intelligence suited to the goals and the ideals of this country.

As we proceed down this path, we will need your understanding and your support, particularly in the delicate area of prosecution-versus-disclosure. And it is for that reason that I am grateful that you've asked me to be here today and given me this opportunity to share these thoughts with you.

And I now look forward to responding to your questions.

Thank you.

[Applause]

MODERATOR: Thank you, Stan. It sounds as if spying wasn't as much fun as I thought it was.

[Laughter]

MODERATOR: Admiral Turner has agreed to respond to your questions for a few minutes, and I've reserved the right to terminate the process in order that we may be able to meet the appointments of the afternoon....

MAN: You mentioned the consolidation of the intelligence services. Does that include the ONI and the military, FBI, and all of the...

ADMIRAL TURNER: I mentioned consolidation of the intelligence services. Does that include ONI and FBI, [unintelligible] of Naval Intelligence, and so on?

Yes, in this regard: As the Director of Central Intelligence, I have authority over their budgets and over how they go out and collect information. But very carefully, what I do not have authority over is how they analyze what we have learned. Because the interpretation of intelligence information is always subject to a great deal of uncertainty, and we must be sure that differing views are permitted to come forward.

So, there is control over the expensive items for collecting intelligence; there is not control over the less expensive, less risky material which is evolved in interpreting it.

MAN: Admiral Turner, it's increasingly suggested that a great deal more material is classified than need be. Can you explain to us what process is used to determine how material

should be classified and when it should be declassified?

ADMIRAL TURNER: ...a lot more classified information than there should be, and what's the process for determining what to classify? A very apt and correct point. We do have far too much classification in the government. It is an almost intractable problem to grapple with, but we are working on it in a number of different ways, one of which is the deliberate publication by the Central Intelligence Agency of much more of its product.

Now, we can't publish how we collect information. But at the back of the room, when you leave today, there will be some examples of our unclassified product for the country. And my thought in doing this, in large measure, is by declassifying this, it's easier to protect what remains. And we get people to understand that when you can remove those classified labels, it benefits everybody, us and the public.

We are also in possession, just recently, of a new presidential directive with some very firm guidelines about overclassification and set procedures and time intervals to automatically bring things down.

But it's not an easy task.

MAN: [Largely unintelligible]

ADMIRAL TURNER: What effect has evolved from the criticism of the Central Intelligence Agency having on recruitment?

I'm very pleased to say to you that through the greatest periods of criticism of the agency, the recruitment of young people, particularly from our colleges and universities, has stayed high. They have seen through this and have seen the marvelous opportunities to serve their country in our intelligence organizations. We are not wanting for lack of good recruit candidates today.

You may have seen some publicity we've had in the last few weeks on our new, or relatively new recruiting advertising. We're doing this, in large measure, because we want to be very selective, we want to have a large base from which to draw, and we want to do more than we've done in the past to insure that we are drawing from all sectors of our country, geographically, ethnically, culturally. We want to draw from both sexes, from all races, and from all parts of our country. Only then can we really do the best job of getting the best and the brightest young people into our organization.

MAN: How strong is your Office of General Counsel? How much do you rely on him [unintelligible]?

ADMIRAL TURNER: How strong is our Office of General Counsel, and how much do we rely on him?

Reece (?) mentioned that before the war I went into a liberal arts college, Amherst in Massachusetts. I had the intent of going from there to law school. I didn't realize it was going to take me 30-some years to get to be a lawyer; but I have so much contact with my general counsel, that I practically am going to law class every day.

Seriously, it's a most important position in the Central Intelligence Agency. A staff of [] lawyers is assigned to him. And we have need of his advice on almost a daily basis -- that is, I do, almost, let alone the entire organization.

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And coming down here on the plane this morning, I had a document that thick from him to read about these charters and the detailed provisions in them.

That's a very critical position, because if we don't write these regulations and these laws in a way that our people can interpret them, a non-lawyer can interpret them, we're really going to hamstring ourselves. And yet we do have to have some form of control.

So he is a key person in our organization, and I work very closely with him, personally.

MAN: Admiral Turner, you commented on the cooperation between your agency and the Attorney General in litigation matters affecting the CIA. Are you able to comment upon how that process was applied in the Snepp case?

ADMIRAL TURNER: How did this coordination between myself and the Attorney General work in the Snepp case?

Snepp was a former CIA employee who wrote a book without giving us the opportunity to review it for classified information, which was part of the contract that every employee signs with us when they come on to duty.

Our relations with the Attorney General were super in that case. I suggested prosecution, and he was willing to stick his neck out and try a new form of prosecution. We talked it out back and forth with our general counsels as to what would be the way to do it, and we tried a non-criminal prosecution there, a violation of contract. And in that circumstance, I did not have to produce the documents. I did not have to produce the classified information that might have come out if we'd brought a criminal charge under the espionage laws, as you can see.

So, the teamwork was just great. And we're so pleased that it worked, and have our fingers crossed that the appeals court, having ruled in our favor, that the Supreme Court will [unintelligible].

MAN: Admiral Turner, there was some feeling that we didn't [unintelligible] anticipate what was happening on Iran. So I wonder if you'd like to comment on that. And could you tell us how things have...

[Laughter]

ADMIRAL TURNER: I've had that question before.

[Laughter]

ADMIRAL TURNER: How did things go wrong in Iran?

One of the things that I started to say at the beginning of my remarks was that we have to be better able to look at the long-term trends, we have to be more subtle in exercising U.S. influence abroad.

And, yes, we would like to have predicted the short-term trends of events in Iran better than we did. But the real measure of our success is: Are we keeping the policymakers advised of the undercurrents, the long-term things on which they can really take effective action?

In this case, we were predicting that there were lots of problems in Iran. We saw problems with political dissidents, economic unrest, religious problems, and so on. What we did not

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We'd like to do better. But I keep saying, when asked this question, that I cannot guaranty that we can always predict coups, revolutions, unusual electoral trends, and so on. But we do hope that we're keeping policymakers advised of the underlying trends behind them. And I believe we're doing a very fine job in that direction.

MAN: Admiral Turner, if your relationship, sir, with the Attorney General is so good, do you have any prognosis at all when and if he is going to either prosecute or dismiss the pending indictments on intelligence officials, so as to remove the interminable [unintelligible] the American public has today

on our entire intelligence system, both domestic and foreign?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I cannot answer that. You must be speaking of FBI intelligence officials, are you?

MAN: Yes, sir, that's what I'm speaking of. It affects the entire intelligence system.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, I wouldn't disagree with what you've said, but, unfortunately, I cannot honestly answer your question, since I've not dealt with him on this question of the FBI officials.

And I'm very sad to say that we only have five more days of Griffin Bell. He just has been a tower of strength to all of us in the 2 1/2 years he's been the Attorney General.

I look forward to Ben Civiletti, who certainly has all those same qualities, but we'll all miss Attorney General Bell.

MAN: [Inaudible]

ADMIRAL TURNER: Do I have any reservations about the SALT treaty?

[Laughter]

ADMIRAL TURNER: My job in the SALT treaty is not to take sides, because the Senate of the United States -- and, of course, the Administration -- want and need to know how well we can check on what the Soviets are doing under the terms of that treaty. And if I take sides on it and express an opinion about it, then the objectivity of my evaluations of how well we can check on it could be questioned.

So we have an ethic in the intelligence community that we abjure being for or against a policy matter like a treaty such as this.

As far as our ability to verify it is concerned, this is a intensely complex technical issue, but it's one on which we have the privilege to give to three committees of the Congress every detail that they have wanted in closed executive session, and I believe they are very well satisfied with what we have been able to adduce for them. What conclusion they are drawing is up to them. They, as your representatives, must take this highly classified information that we provide them on our verification capabilities and translate it into decisions for all of us.

I thank you very much for your attention and for the privilege of being with you today.